Religion v. No Religion

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HARIJAN

Editor: PYARELAL

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EXCESSIVE PRAISE

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

Thus an army officer to a friend:

". . . And what a pity it is that, in all democratic countries, politicians are so ignorant of and uninterested in the army. The army could teach them much. Is it not at least worthy of deep thought as to why it is, that the army has held the loyalty and affection of the man serving in it to a far greater degree than any other Government service? And held it moreover under conditions of danger and discomfort and trial far exceeding those of any other service. You have a fine army and it will be finer still when your best men come forth in large numbers to officer it. Find the right officers and you need have no fears about it. It will be second to none. But put in the wrong officers or get it mixed up with politics and you will have a heavy bill to pay. India is bound to have many troubled years ahead, but I am convinced that the one thing which can pull you through them most quickly and with the minimum bloodshed is your present army, provided you find officers for it and keep politics and religious differences out of it."

It is not a matter for pity if it is true that in all democratic countries politicians are uninterested in the army. The pity of it is that they are wrongly interested in it. The democracies regard army men as their saviours. They bring wealth and subjugate other countries and sustain authority in times of civil disturbance. What is, therefore, to be wished is that democracy to be true, should cease to rely upon the army for anything whatsoever.

What has the army done for India? It is for that army that the writer pleads. I fear that in no sense has it served India's interest. It has kept millions of inoffensive and disarmed people under subjection. It has impoverished them. It is an army of which the sooner the British part is sent away and better employed, the better for both India and England, and the world. The sooner the Indian part is turned away from its destructive purpose and its talent employed for constructive purposes, the better it will be for democracy in India. It will be a poor democracy that depends for its existence on military assistance. Military force interferes with the free growth of the mind. It smothers the soul of man. Thanks to years of foreign domination brought about by the "highly efficient" army, India, in spite of the efforts of the Mission, might have to pull through a long or short civil war which, I shall hope, will bring to an end all infatuation for armed forces. They are a brutalizing process after you have isolated discipline which should be common for any social order. If Free India has to sustain the present military expenditure, it will bring no relief to the famishing millions.

Mussoorie, 30-5-'46

WEEKLY LETTER

THE LENGTHENING SHADOW

Gandhiji left for Mussoorie under the lengthening shadow of communal disturbances in many cities of India. The senselessness of these riots oppresses him. He knows that very often they are either directly engineered by unscrupulous persons to serve as a weapon for blackmail and intimidation or are the result of mass hysteria let loose by unthinking propaganda. And it is always the deluded man in the street who is the victim while the real culprit sits secure behind the facade of respectability.

A celebrated English writer describing the panic-stricken years of the Popish Plot of 1678-80 has recorded how in his times, "there were a hundred stout fellows ready to fight to death against Popery without knowing whether Popery was a man or a horse." The same holds good in regard to our present day communal riots. What is a man of prayer to do under such circumstances, asked Gandhiji, in his silence day's written message which was read out at the last prayer meeting that he had at Delhi. "It is obvious," he remarked, "that one cannot go to all the places where the riots may break out. But one can refuse to encourage them by word, deed or thought. If riots should break out before one's eyes, one should try to prevent them even at the risk of one's life, but never by taking the life of another. As I said yesterday, more potent than the spoken word is a pure thought. Do you believe it? And if so, will you act according to your belief?"

MUSSOORIE

Mussoorie with its cool, pine-scented breezes, shady walks and thickly wooded crags and hill-sides has afforded welcome relief after the broiling heat and dust storms of the Imperial City. This is Gandhiji's third visit to this hill station — the last one being eighteen years ago on the eve of the Independence Resolution that was passed in the Lahore Congress that year. A deep note of resignation, sadness and introspection ran through his first public utterance at the evening prayer gathering which was held in the compound of the Birla House where he is putting up. How could he feel at home amidst the endless saturnalia of fashions that is Mussoorie? He recalled his previous visits to Mussoorie, which were in connection with Congress work. This time he had come purely on his own. "As you know I

am not even a four-anna member but only a humble servant of the Congress like the unnamed crores who are not on its rolls but serve it all the same humbly and quietly to the best of their capacity without expectation of name or reward. And why? Because the thirst of freedom has taken possession of their souls. They do not know how it can be won. But they have heard that the Congress is the one organization that has for the last sixty years been fighting the good fight that would bring freedom to all without distinction. That is why they are devoted to it. I have come to Mussoorie as one of them — a humble, private individual." He did not want anyone to be bothered with taking care of him. "God alone is my protector. How can puny man, who is not sure even of his own tomorrow, presume to protect another? I am content to be under God's care. He may protect or destroy. I know He sometimes even destroys to protect."

He had been told before, and again since his arrival at Mussoorie, of the life of the fashionable rich in Mussoorie. Like other Himalayan hill stations, Mussoorie was no place for the poor. "The poor slave for you. They draw your rickshaws. It hurts me, and it ought to hurt you too, that a fellow human being should pull the rickshaw of a healthy and able-bodied person. I say this not to criticize you but to remind you of those whose very existence you are otherwise apt to forget, but who nevertheless are India. It is up to you to think of them and enter into their lives.

"I long for the day when *Ramanama* would save me from the necessity of having to go to hill stations during the summer. Crores cannot go to the hill stations. They are born to live and die on the plains.

I have not come here for pleasure but only under medical necessity so that I might be able to serve you the more. Give me your blessings and let me have a little quiet so that I can attend to my work and commune with the Maker undisturbed."

A Sanctuary for the Poor

He did not allow the matter to rest there. On the following day he again took it up and suggested that Mussoorie should have a place where the poor could come and avail themselves of the benefits of the hill climate whenever necessary. "I myself have become a Harijan by choice. I would love to be in a place where Harijans too can come and dwell. A Harijan by birth may repudiate his *varna* but how can I who has become a Harijan by choice? I have not hesitated to suggest to Caste Hindus that today they have all to become *atishudras*, if the canker of caste feeling is to be eradicated from Hinduism and Hinduism is not to perish from the face of the earth." If there were such a place in Mussoorie itself, where even Harijans would be welcome, he would rather stay there. In answer to a similar suggestion at Panchgani, the people there were planning to have a place of that type. He was glad to inform the gathering that there was some talk already of a committee of the citizens of Mussoorie being formed for that purpose.

Coffin at the Feast

What, however, exercised his mind even more was the impending famine. He reminded his fashionable audience of the coffin at their feast. As a matter of fact the famine was already in the land. Crores were not getting enough to eat. Rich people were perhaps ready to give money, but no one could eat money. There was not enough food in the country. Whatever there was could not be transported quickly to the deficit areas. Such was the bankruptcy of Government. Then again there were places where people went hungry in spite of the fact that the food was stored on the spot. The reason was all round corruption and the greed of our own people. He appealed to those who were well off and could afford to get somehow whatever they wanted, to spare every grain of foodstuffs, that they could. If the people co-operated and there was no black-marketing and corruption, possibly there was enough food in the land to enable them to tide over the crisis. There were some who did not agree with him and maintained that if we did not get food from other countries we could not avoid starvation and death. He was not of that opinion. It would take time for the supplies to reach India in the first instance and even after they were landed in the ports, it would take about six weeks to transport them to the needed areas. The only real remedy was self-help and co-operation among all and disappearance of corruption. He appealed to the well-to-do men and women of Mussoorie to save every grain they could for the famishing people. If all voluntarily restricted themselves absolutely to what was needed for their health, they would be well able to tide over their difficulties.

Mussoorie, 1-6-'46 PYARELAL

QUESTION BOX

(By M. K. Gandhi)

Q. What can one do if in spite of putting in a full day's labour, one cannot get enough to eat?

A. The labourer is worthy of his hire. This law is as old as the hills. All useful labour ought to bring in the same and adequate wages to the labourer. Till that time comes, the least that should be done is to see that every labourer gets enough to feed and clothe himself and his family. A government that does not ensure this much is no government. It is anarchy. Such a state should be resisted peacefully. Looting of grain shops and rowdyism is not the remedy. It leads to needless loss and death. Even if the authorities give in out of fear, it does not really help them or the people. It does not remove anarchy and things remain as they were. A look round the world will confirm what is here stated.

If, in spite of the collections of food grain in the depots, the hungry cannot get it, they can offer peaceful Satyagraha. They should not take by force what has not been given to them. They can go on a fast unto death and thus secure relief for themselves and for others. If they have patience, the method suggested by me is sure of success.

Mussoorie, 29-5-'46

(From *Harijanbandhu*)

IS LYING EVER JUSTIFIABLE?

Q. What do you say to the following from Bertrand Russell? "I once in the course of a country walk saw a tired fox at the last stages of exhaustion still forcing himself to run. A few minutes afterwards I saw the hunt. They asked me if I had seen the fox, and I said I had. They asked me which way he had gone, and I lied to them. I do not think I should have been a better man if I had told the truth."

A. Bertrand Russell is a great writer and philosopher. With all respect to him I must dissent from the view attributed to him. He made the initial mistake of admitting that he had seen the fox. He was not bound to answer the first question. He could even have refused to answer the second question unless he deliberately wanted to put the hunt off the track. I have always maintained that nobody is bound always to answer questions that may be put to him. Truth-telling admits of no exceptions.

ADDRESSES AND FLORAL TRIBUTES

Q. A correspondent complains: "In many of the provinces there are Congress ministries, and the public is proud of the fact. So when any Minister visits any place, the local bodies or local institutions show their respect by presenting addresses of value. In almost all the cases, these things become the property of the Minister. This practice, in my opinion, is not good. Either this system of receiving addresses must be stopped or the things presented should go, say, to the local Congress Committee. There should be some definite policy regarding the garlanding of the Ministers or the Congress leaders. I have seen several cases where these Ministers have been honoured with flowers costing not less than 300 to 400 rupees. This is mere waste of money."

A. The complaint is valid. No public servant should receive for his own use addresses of value or costly floral tributes. These things have become a nuisance, if they are not much worse. The argument is often trotted out that costly frames and flowers put money into the pockets of artisans. The latter are well able to take care of themselves without the aid of Ministers and the like. These gentlemen do not travel for pleasure. Theirs are business tours undertaken often for listening to what the people have to say. The addresses presented to them need not extol their virtues which are their own reward. They should express accurately local wants and grievances if any. In these times the Ministers and their secretaries have a hard task before them. Public adulation instead of being a help will become a hindrance.

Mussoorie, 31-5-'46

By M. K. Gandhi
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FAITH CURE v. RAMANAMA

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

Here is fine banter from a friend:

"I have read your 'Confession and Cure' in *Harijan* of 17-3-'46. I wonder whether this Nature Cure has any close relation to what is being called Faith Cure. Of course one should have faith in treatment. But there are some exclusive faith cures, for example, small-pox, stomach pain, etc. For small-pox as you might know, especially in the South, no treatment is given but it is considered Divine Play. We do *poojas* to Goddess Mariamma and it is almost miraculous to see most of the cases come out successful. For stomach pain, even chronic cases, many make vows before the deity at Thirupathi and finding themselves cured fulfil their ablutions and other obligations. To give you a fitting example, my mother had the same pain and after her visit to Thirupathi she is now free from that disease.

"Will you kindly enlighten me on this and may I ask why people should not have such faith in Nature Cure also and save the recurring expenditure to the doctors who, as Chaucer said, maintain a fine conspiracy with the apothecary to keep a patient always a patient which is part of the natural order of things."

The examples that have been quoted are neither Nature Cure not yet *Ramanama* which I have included in it. But they do show how nature cures without any treatment in many cases. They are undoubtedly cases which show the part superstition plays in Indian life. *Ramanama* which is the centre of Nature Cure is the enemy of superstition. Unscrupulous men will abuse *Ramanama* as they will any other thing or system. Mere lip recitation of *Ramanama* has nothing to do with cure. Faith cure, if I know it correctly, is blind cure, such as the friend describes and thereby ridicules the living name of the living God. The latter is not a figment of one's imagination. It has to come from the heart. It is conscious belief in God and a knowledge of His Law that make perfect cure possible without any further aid. That law is that a perfect mind is responsible for perfect health of the body. A perfect mind comes from a perfect heart, not the heart known by a doctor's stethoscope but the heart which is the seat of God. It is claimed that realization of God in the heart makes it impossible for an impure or an idle thought to cross the mind. Disease is impossible where there is purity of thought. Such a state may be difficult to attain. But the first step in the ascent to health is taken with its recognition. The next is taken when the corresponding attempt is made. This radical alteration in one's life is naturally accompanied by the observance of all other nature's laws hitherto discovered by man. One cannot play with them and claim to have a pure heart. It can be said with justice that possession of a pure heart should do equally well without *Ramanama*. Only, I know no other way of attaining purity. And it is the way trodden by the sages of old all over the world. They were men of God, not superstitious men or charlatans.

If this is Christian science, I have no quarrel with it. The way of *Ramanama* is not my discovery. It is probably much older than the Christian era.

A correspondent questions whether *Ramanama* avoids *bona fide* surgical operations. Of course, it does not. It cannot restore a leg that is cut off in an accident. In many cases, surgical operations are unnecessary. Where they are required they should be performed. But a man of God will not worry if a limb is lost. Recitation of *Ramanama* is neither an empirical method nor a makeshift.

Mussoorie, 30-5-'46

HARIJAN

June 9 • 1946

RELIGION v. NO RELIGION

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

A correspondent writes:

"In the *Harijanbandhu* of the 5th May you have written that your non-violence contemplates destruction of animals dangerous to mankind, such as leopards, wolves, snakes, scorpions etc.

"You do not believe in giving food to dogs etc. Several other people besides the Gujaratis look upon the feeding of dogs as a meritorious act. Such a belief may not be justifiable in times of food shortage like the present. Yet we must remember that these animals can be very useful to man. One can feed them and take work out of them.

"You had put 27 questions to Shri Raichandbhai from Durban. One of these questions was: 'What should a seeker do when a snake attacks him?' His answer was: 'He should not kill the snake and, if it bites, he should let it do so.' How is it that you speak differently now?"

I have written a lot on this subject in the past. At that time the topic was the killing of rabid dogs. There was much discussion on the subject but all that seems to have been forgotten.

My non-violence is not merely kindness to all living creatures. The emphasis laid on the sacredness of sub-human life in Jainism is understandable. But that can never mean that one is to be kind to this life in preference to human life. While writing about the sacredness of such life, I take it that the sacredness of human life has been taken for granted. The former has been overemphasized. And, while putting it into practice, the idea has undergone distortion. For instance, there are many who derive complete satisfaction in feeding ants. It would appear that the theory has become a wooden, lifeless dogma. Hypocrisy and distortion are passing current under the name of religion.

Ahimsa is the highest ideal. It is meant for the brave, never for the cowardly. To benefit by others' killing and delude oneself into the belief that one is being very religious and non-violent, is sheer self-deception.

A so-called votary of non-violence will not stay in a village which is visited by a leopard everyday. He will run away and, when someone has killed the leopard, will return to take charge of his hearth and home. This is not non-violence. This is a coward's violence. The man who has killed the leopard has at least given proof of some bravery. The man who takes advantage of the killing is a coward. He can never expect to know true non-violence.

In life it is impossible to eschew violence completely. The question arises, where is one to draw the line? The line cannot be the same for everyone. Although essentially the principle is the same, yet everyone applies it in his or her own way. What is one man's food can be another's poison. Meat-eating is a sin for me. Yet, for another person, who has always lived on meat and never seen anything wrong in it, to give it up simply in order to copy me will be a sin.

If I wish to be an agriculturist and stay in the jungle, I will have to use the minimum unavoidable violence in order to protect my fields. I will have to kill monkeys, birds and insects which eat up my crops. If I do not wish to do so myself, I will have to engage someone to do it for me. There is not much difference between the two. To allow crops to be eaten up by animals in the name of *ahimsa* while there is a famine in the land is certainly a sin. Evil and good are relative terms. What is good under certain conditions can become an evil or a sin under a different set of conditions.

Man is not to drown himself in the well of *Shastras* but he is to dive in their broad ocean and bring out pearls. At every step he has to use his discrimination as to what is *ahimsa* and what is *himsa*. In this there is no room for shame or cowardice. The poet has said that the road leading up to God is for the brave, never for the cowardly.

Finally, Raichandbhai's advice to me was that if I had courage, if I wanted to see God face to face, I should let myself be bitten by a snake instead of killing it. I have never killed a snake before or after receiving that letter. That is no matter of credit for me. My ideal is to be able to play with snakes and scorpions fearlessly. But it is merely a wish so far. Whether and when it will be realized I do not know. Everywhere I have let my people kill both. I could have prevented them if I had wished. But how could I? I did not have the courage to take them up with my own hands and teach my companions a lesson in fearlessness. I am ashamed that I could not do so. But my shame could not benefit them or me.

If *Ramanama* favours me I might still attain that courage some day. In the meantime, I consider it my duty to act as I have stated above. Religion is a thing to be lived. It is not mere sophistry.

Mussoorie, 29-5-'46

(From *Harijanbandhu*)

MORE SUGGESTIONS

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

It is a good sign that food shortage is taxing many minds. Suggestions for meeting it come in from all quarters. A friend, who knows what he writes about, sends the following:

"(1) When there is an acute shortage of cereals why need non-vegetarians, who can take animal food, be given the same ration of cereals as vegetarians ? A substantial saving in cereals should be possible by reducing the ration of cereals to non-vegetarians to the extent that it is possible to supplement equal nutrition value by non-vegetarian food.

"(2) Ration of cereals has been reduced. I expect that a large number of men who do manual work find difficulty in satisfying hunger with the reduced rations. Several supplement the reduced quantity by adding *mung*, gram and barley to wheat and then have the mixture made into flour. But the cost of these three is higher than that of wheat. Many cannot afford it. It, therefore, follows that to the extent that cereals are reduced to non-vegetarians, animal food, having equal nutrition value, should be substituted and that also for the same cost as that of the cereal reduced. I have calculated the cost and it is not likely to exceed 15 crores during the next few months. No amount can be too large to save human life. It is mentioned that 10 to 15 millions may die in India due to food shortage.

"(3) Taking of life is very repugnant to me. But when the choice lies between human life and animal life, I think that the former should have preference. There is a large damage to crops by deer, rabbit, boar, pig and pigeon. I am a vegetarian. But non-vegetarians tell me that these have food value and can be used for food. By a proper organization, though difficult, but not impossible, it should be possible to organize, shooting of these animals so as to provide regular supply in certain areas, particularly in large cities. Incidentally, destruction on a large scale of these would be reflected in reduced destruction of field crops.

"(4) To save food in order that it will be available for famine areas under the present system of ration appeals to very few. There is so much of black-marketing and corruption that one feels that what one saves would find its way to the black market. There would be a good psychological appeal if the food-grains saved are collected and guaranteed to be sent to the famine areas. This will have to be organized. But I feel that substantial quantities will be forthcoming."

Whether the authorities act up to the first or not, it is one which those honest meat-eaters who draw full vegetarian rations can. They can easily part with a portion of their cereals for the benefit of those in need. Mutual aid is the swiftest way of reaching relief to the needy in such cases.

The second follows from the first.

The third is contentious. In a country where all life is largely held sacred and even when it is not, habit has made people reluctant to take any life, the suggestion may be difficult of adoption even by non-vegetarians. But a confirmed respecter of all life though I am, I have no difficulty in recommending for acceptance by meat-eaters the suggestion that the correspondent's wisdom has dictated. I hope to examine an argument in "*Harijanbandhu*" advanced against the taking of even noxious life without any connection with food

The fourth suggestion, though sound, is not likely to produce any tangible result because of the ruling corruption and the inefficiency and irresponsibility of the Government. The difficulty will only be met when there is a national government which is responsible to the people and to which the people may look forward with confidence. It has been long coming. Will it ever come ?

Mussoorie, 29-5-'46

Notes

Wholesale Releases

Responsible ministries in the provinces have naturally meant wholesale releases of political prisoners. These include convicts sentenced for murder, arson, robbery etc. Correspondents ask how far these releases should be acclaimed by the public as of heroes and martyrs.

It is one thing to release, for a variety of reasons, persons who were convicted of such crimes. It is wholly another thing to praise the acts as of heroes to be received with every mark of honour. I have no doubt that it is thoughtless and wrong. If I am in need of money for a public purpose and commit robbery I do not cease to be a robber, because the robbery committed by me is for public use. This indiscriminate praise of every crime, so long as it is dignified by the name of patriotism, is a boomerang bound to return with redoubled force to the nation which will have to pay heavily for it. Independence, though it includes the freedom even to commit a crime, may easily prove a curse, if it does not carry a voluntary rigid restraint. The public approbation referred to, is wrong education of the people and a harmful preparation for the independence that is coming much sooner than many of us expect.

Mussoorie, 31-5-'46

Uruli Kanchan

My co-workers from Uruli Kanchan inform me that patients from far distances are coming there for treatment. I have already written in 'Harijansevak' that up till now there is nowhere any permanent arrangement for anyone to live and no room for in-patients. I have just heard that some land has been made available but the work of building huts on it remains. There is no house available in the village either where patients from outside could be taken in and, in any event, it has never been the intention to turn a village into a city. The real aim is for every village to have a nature clinic to adorn it just as it should have a school.

Readers should bear in mind that my co-workers in Uruli Kanchan are unable to guide patients through correspondence. Persons who live far away can carry out their own nature cure treatment. Who cannot recite *Ramanama* in his own home? It is also possible for everyone to have sitz baths etc., wherever he is.

Mussoorie, 2-6-'46 M. K. G.

(From *Harijansevak*)

I. N. A. MEN'S DILEMMA

Between 50 to 60 senior officers of the I. N. A. met Gandhiji in the Sweepers' Colony the other day during his stay in Delhi. They first sang in a chorus the I. N. A. Hindustani adaptation of Gurudev's song "*Janaganamana adhinayaka jaya he Bharata-bhagyavidhata*" just as they had sung during Gandhiji's visit to them behind the barbed wire fence in the Kabul Lines when their fate still hung in the balance. Gandhiji then addressed them a few words in Hindustani.

"Other friends have placed before me," he began, "the dilemma which, I am told, faces many of you too. The Congress creed is, of course, that of winning Swaraj through non-violence and peaceful means but there are many men outside, and even within the Congress, who have begun to doubt whether that policy of the Congress has not exhausted its purpose and now become effete for the tasks that lie ahead, especially in view of the changed and changing times.

"You who have served under Subhash Babu as veteran fighters have proved your mettle on the battlefield. Success and failure are, however, not in our hands, but in God's hands alone. Netaji told you when bidding good-bye to you that, on your return to India, you must put yourself under the Congress discipline and act according to its policy. Your object, as I have been told, was only to free India, never to help the Japanese. You failed in your direct objective, *i.e.* to defeat the British. But you have the satisfaction that the whole country has been roused and even the regular forces have been stirred into a new political consciousness and have begun to think in terms of independence. You have achieved a complete unity among the Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Christians, Anglo-Indians and Sikhs in your ranks. That is no mean achievement. What, however, you realized under conditions of freedom outside India, you have now to sustain and keep alive under Indian conditions. That will be your real test.

"If you have imbibed the spirit of non-violence, you will remain free men at heart even here. For instance, no government on earth can make men, who have realized freedom in their hearts, salute against their will. If they threaten to kill them they will offer their necks to them, but refuse to submit. The odds are that a soldier's spirit will revolt against such cold-blooded murder. Thus, whether they live or die it will be as free men. They will never be slaves. If you all become free men at heart, the whole of India will be free. They might imprison you. You will welcome it or you can tell them that you will be a corpse before they can put you into prison. Both alternatives are open to a non-violent soldier and both call for bravery of the highest order. Our task is no less than to reinfuse life into the 400 millions of India. We have to dispel fear from their hearts. On the day they shed all fear, India's fetters shall fall and she will be free.

"Years ago I said at Nankanasahib: 'Sikhs have given proof of their martial valour. But the consummation of Guru Govind Singh's ideal will be reached only when they will substitute for their *kirpans* the sword of the spirit or non-violence.' So long as one wants to retain one's sword, one has not attained complete fearlessness. No power on earth can subjugate you when you are armed with the sword of *ahimsa*. It ennobles both the victor and the vanquished. Netaji has fired you with a new spirit. That spirit can now be kept alive only through non-violence."

Having thus explained to them the significance of *ahimsa* in terms of martial courage, Gandhiji proceeded to place before them the higher type of courage that is required of a Satyagrahi soldier to become an ideal, self-respecting citizen. "Above all, you must never beg or throw yourself on anybody's charity. Because you have risked your lives for India's sake and fought for her on the Imphal plain, you must not expect to be pampered in return. If you do that, you will lose all worth like the salt that has lost its savour. You should prefer to earn your bread by the sweat of your brow, but refuse to beg or accept charity. In short, you have to show the same degree of bravery and courage of the non-violent type as you have done in the use of arms hitherto.

"If you want land you will have it. You will clear it and turn it into model farms. You have to overcome the inertia of ages which weighs down our masses. That you will be able to do only by setting an example of industry and hard work. You must be able to wield the bucket and the broom with skill and diligence and not consider the cleaning of latrines as dirty or beneath your dignity. Graduation in this work is more heroic than winning the Victoria Cross."

Then followed questions and answers.

Q. How can one who has spent his whole life in fighting take to *ahimsa* with success? Are not the two incompatible?

A. I do not agree. Badshah Khan is a Pathan. But today he has become a soldier of non-violence. Tolstoy too served in the army. Yet he became the high priest of non-violence in Europe. We have not yet realized fully the power that is in non-violence. If the Government had not arrested me in 1942, I would have shown how to fight Japan by non-violence.

Q. Surely, it is no breach of *ahimsa* to use the sword in self-defence?

A. Even Wavell, Auchinleck or Hitler does not use the sword without necessity. But that does not make it *ahimsa*. It is *himsa*, whatever its justification.

Q. You cannot take the world along with you if you adopt *ahimsa*. You have to choose the one or the other.

A. There again I disagree. A reformer has to sail not with the current, very often he has to go against it, even though it may cost him his life. You must not be carried off your feet by unthinking, popular applause. The essential part of your message

to the country is not how to wield the sword but to cease to be afraid of it.

Q. What would you have done if Subhas Babu had returned to you victorious?

A. I would have asked him to make you put away your weapons and stack them before me.

Mussoorie, 30-5-'46 PYARELAL

THE IDEAL WOMAN

"A virtuous woman who can find?
For her price is far above rubies.
The heart of her husband trusteth in her,
And he shall have no lack of gain.
She doeth him good and not evil
All the days of her life.
She seeketh wool and flax,
And worketh willingly with her hands.
She is like the merchant ships;
She bringeth her food from afar.
She riseth also while it is yet night,
And giveth meat to her household,
And their task to her maidens.
She considereth a field and buyeth it;
With the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.
She girdeth her loins with strength,
And maketh strong her arms.
She perceiveth that her merchandise is profitable;
Her lamp goeth not out by night.
She layeth her hands to the distaff,
And her hands hold the spindle.
She spreadeth out her hand to the poor;
Yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.
She is not afraid of the snow for her household;
For all her household are clothed with scarlet.
She maketh for herself carpets of tapestry;
Her clothing is fine linen and purple.
Her husband is known in the gates,
When he sitteth among the elders of the land.
She maketh linen garments and selleth them;
And delivereth girdles unto the merchant.
Strength and dignity are her clothing;
And she laugheth at the time to come.
She openeth her mouth with wisdom;
And the law of kindness is on her tongue.
She looketh well to the ways of her household,
And eateth not the bread of idleness.
Her children rise up and call her blessed;
Her husband also, and he praiseth her, saying:
Many daughters have done virtuously,
But thou excellest them all.
Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain;
But a woman that feareth the Lord,
She shall be praised.
Give her of the fruit of her hands;
And let her works praise her in the gates."

The above picture is centuries old. It is Hebrew, drawn from Solomon's wisdom. It is possible to get similar descriptions from Indian seers. It would appear that in those days women must have worked with skill and ability and shared the burden and heat of the day equally with men and thus made life worth-while. The words of wisdom were meant not so much for the poor as for the well-to-do. In any event the ideal is there for every woman today to turn her attention to. The strength depicted in the picture, the variety of woman's activities, her position as a builder not only of the home but of society, all have gone from her in the East, at any rate. Instead of being the mainstay of her home, woman has become a weak dependent. It is high time she returned to the spindle and sought wool and flax in order to mend the broken tapestry of life. If woman in India can rise to the heights described by the seer, she will certainly contribute greatly towards the regeneration, not only of her own country but also of the world. It is not much use planning for a new world unless one tries forthwith and firstly to make oneself worthy to fit into a true structure.

Mussoorie,
29-5-'46 A. K.

HARIJAN WORK IN BHUSAWAL TALUKA

(By M. K. Gandhi)

Shri Thakkar Bapa writes:

"It has been decided to carry on sound and extensive Harijan work in the Bhusawal Taluka. For that purpose two meetings were arranged on the 14th of May. Shri Vaikunthbhai Mehta, Shri Ganapatrao Tapase, Shri Barve, Shri Dastane and myself were present. We aim at having all the public wells opened to Harijans. The villagers showed great enthusiasm and we are hopeful of success. The circumstances are favourable."

What Bapa says is true. By favourable circumstances, Shri Thakkar Bapa probably means the establishment of a Congress ministry. That does not mean that henceforth reforms will be imposed upon the people. There is the least room for the use of force in such things. An evil like untouchability which has found its way to the very marrow of the people's bones, and that too in the name of religion, cannot be removed forcibly. But an alien government uses its influence to further suppress the suppressed by force. And when it tries to help them from a motive, pure or selfish, that too is done by the exercise of force. The Congress has not established its position through force. It is a purely democratic organization. Therefore, it is hoped that the Congress ministers will educate public opinion and win popular support for all its progressive measures. This should result in an impetus to reforms like Harijan work in their province and the forces standing in the way of such reforms would automatically disappear. Moreover, intensive work in the limited area of the Bhusawal Taluka is likely to prove very fruitful. We cannot reach the whole of India at one and the same time. Wherever the workers have the requisite ability and influence, the work will proceed at a quicker pace. Sound work in a small area is therefore likely to be copied by others and thus lead to an early success. Let us hope that will be the result of the work which has been started in Bhusawal.

Mussoorie, 29-5-'46
(From *Harijanbandhu*)

INSTRUCTIVE CONVERSATION ON KHADI

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

A Khadi worker writes:

"I give below a recent conversation between the manager of a Khadi Bhandar and some customers. Should Khadi be sold to such persons?

"Q. 'Is this yarn spun by you?'

"A. 'No. I have bought these 8 hanks for Rs. 10.

"Q. To a second customer: 'Are you able to spin all this yarn?'

"A. 'No. This is spun by my daughter. We sell yarn too at the rate of 12 annas per hank.'

"Q. To a third: 'You cannot buy Khadi unless you produce the requisite quantity of yarn.'

"A. 'It does not matter. So long as I cannot get the yarn, I will buy uncertified Khadi.'

"Q. To a fourth: 'Why do you buy Khadi?'

"A. 'Because it is easy to procure.'

"Q. To a fifth: 'You are not a regular wearer of Khadi. What will you do with what you have bought?'

"A. 'Today Khadi is looked upon as being in the fashion.'

"Q. To a sixth: 'You do not spin yourself. From where then comes this yarn?'

"A. 'A good friend of mine always provides me with yarn.'

"Q. To a seventh: 'Why do you always wear either silk or wool Khadi?'

"A. 'Because I do not have to give yarn for these.'

"Q. To an eighth: 'You have bought a large quantity of Khadi. What will you do with it all?'

"A. 'This will last me two or three years. After that it will be seen whether I can get any or not.'"

The above questions and answers are revealing. If the new policy in regard to Khadi is correct and Khadi customers are of the above nature, it proves the necessity for the abolition of the Khadi clause from the Congress constitution. It is worthy of note that the questions and answers concern eight persons. The Charkha Sangh need not cater for the needs of a single one of them. The Spinners' Association exists only for the poor. Those who wear Khadi, do so either for the sake of the poor or for winning Swaraj or both. The eight customers mentioned above are concerned with neither. If the Charkha Sangh is to prove the rightness of the ideal for which Khadi stands, then its workers must be loyal enough to the new policy and not fear even the closing down of the sales Bhandars. They must have the strength to bear any consequences in order to set right the mistakes of the past.

The above conversation also holds a warning to the managers of the Bhandars to be wide awake. They should become experts in the science of Khadi and be prepared to teach customers the inner meaning of Khadi with patience and humility. This may take time but it is worth-while. If there is faith in the power of Khadi I have no doubt that we shall remain steadfast and thereby inspire others to the belief also. But if workers themselves lack faith then the claim for Khadi will fall to the ground.

I have taken for granted that the conversation has been truly reported.

Mussoorie, 1-6-'46

(From *Harijansevak*)

MINISTERIAL SALARIES

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

I have to pay heavily for the caution with which I wrote the other day the paragraph in 'Harijan' in regard to increase in ministerial salaries. I have to go through long letters bewailing my caution and arguing with me to revise my view. How can ministers make large increases in their own original fat salaries when the poor *chaprasis* and clerks get an increase which hardly meets the occasion? I have re-read my note and I claim that the short note includes all that the various correspondents desire. But, in order to avoid any misunderstanding, I expand my meaning.

I have been twitted for not referring to the Karachi Resolution. The lower scale of ministers' salaries rests on much higher ground than the authority of a resolution. In any event, so far as I am aware, the Congress has never varied that resolution. It is as binding today as it was when it was passed.

I do not know that the increase in the salaries is justified. But I must not offhand condemn the increase without knowing the case of the ministers. Critics should know that I have no authority over them or any one else except myself. Nor am I present at all the meetings of the Working Committee. I attend only when required by the President. I can only give my opinion for what it is worth. And, if it is to have any weight, it must be well-conceived and based on ascertained facts.

The question of the hideous inequality between the rich and the poor and the lower services and the higher is a separate subject requiring drastic and well thought out method and could not be merely incidental to the lowering of the salaries of the few ministers and their secretaries. Both subjects require to be dealt with on merits. The question of salaries could be and should be easily disposed of by the ministers concerned. The other is a much vaster subject requiring a thorough overhauling. I would any day agree that the ministers should tackle the subject in their own provinces without delay and that the lower ranks should before everything else have their salaries fully reconsidered and increased wherever necessary.

Mussoorie, 31-5-'46

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